

# CONVOY LIVE FIRE:

## Training the Support Platoon To Defend Itself in Ambushes

by Captain J.M. Pierre

The Logistics Package (LOG-PAC) convoy has the singular responsibility of ensuring that supplies move from the field trains to the Logistics Release Point (LRP). The convoy, however, is lightly armed and a high priority target for enemy forces in the rear. On the Korean peninsula, this problem is a focus for training support assets. All soldiers must be riflemen and must know the basics of fire and movement in order to defend themselves in the enemy "kill zone."

HHC, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry (Mechanized) trained its support platoon to react to convoy ambushes. This training started with basic soldier skills, then unit collective tasks, and finally training with live fire. This article covers the planning, preparation, and execution phases of our convoy live fire exercise and concludes with lessons learned.

### Planning

In this training exercise, the collective tasks which supported the 2-9 IN (M) METL per 7-94 MTP were:

- Prepare LOGPAC (7-3-1512),
- Execute LOGPAC (7-3-1513) and,
- Perform Tactical Road March (7-2-1301).

The last two were identified as our essential tasks, with critical tasks of react to ambush.

The scenario required the convoy to perform a tactical road march from the task force field trains to the LRP. In the process, a lightly equipped force ambushed the convoy. This scenario was modified to include an ambush with and without an obstacle. When unobstructed, the convoy was required to return fire and continue to move. With an obstacle that may not be bypassed, the convoy was required to perform a



SOSR (Suppress, Obscure, Secure, and Reduce) drill.

Our scenario required soldiers to execute a herringbone, dismount, and form a horseshoe from which to defend. A gun truck would move through the front of the convoy and lay down a base of fire while dismount teams moved to their firing positions and reduced the obstacle.

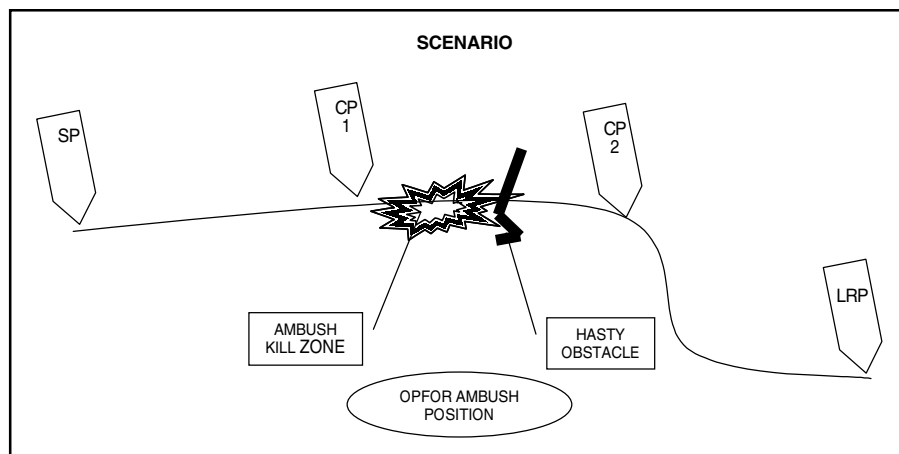
### Preparation

HHC, 2-9 IN (M) conducted a leader's reconnaissance of the Warrior Val-

ley range at the Korea Training Center. The range OIC, support platoon leader, and support platoon sergeant gained an understanding of the terrain and refined the scenario on the ground, concluding with a common vision of the firing lines and the target arrays. As surface danger zones (SDZ) of the range varied, we also ensured the range supported the ammunition the convoy carried. Finally, we validated and modified the scenario with range control.

Convoy live fire takes an entire day to train. 2-9 IN (M) programmed this training during the overall scheme of its gunnery density. HHC coordinated for the Warrior Valley range, the ammunition requirements, and a chow cycle that would support the absence of the support platoon. Soldiers were tasked to serve as the range OIC, NCOIC, ammunition NCO, and range safety/controllers — two for every firing line. A medical vehicle also followed the movement of the convoy.

Training up to the live fire began at the individual level. The prerequisite to shooting in this exercise was a current



weapons qualification. Soldiers who are out of tolerance could participate during the maneuver firing blanks, but could not shoot ball ammunition. Drivers were also trained to move and react under various conditions until they could drive off road at night and in NBC. Soldiers also learned to identify and mark mines and reduce obstacles using grappling hooks.

During the 2-9 IN (M) gunnery densities, the field trains were separated from the LRP by 10 kilometers. Our collective training emphasized “react to ambush” drills. With the assistance of an OPFOR, a “thinking enemy,” we rehearsed the same scenario we would use on the live range. This resulted in a heightened awareness of a threat to the convoy and allowed us to train tactics, techniques, and procedures for reactions to their ambushes.

### Execution

The convoy live fire day was conducted in three phases: dry fire, blank fire and validation, and live fire. We stressed the obstacle situation.

The dry fire phase was the most intensive part of the day. From the baseline, soldiers were oriented to the scenario and given the task and purpose of the training by the OIC. This was followed by a rock drill. Soldiers trained and retrained individual movement techniques, movement as a fire team, and also practiced throwing smoke grenades. The gun truck practiced moving through the convoy and engagement techniques. Simultaneously, the breach team practiced reducing the obstacle enough so that the largest vehicle could move through it. After the rock drill, soldiers ran through the scenario, followed by range safety personnel.

The blank fire phase repeated the same actions, but with blank ammunition. An intensive rock drill and dry run facilitated soldiers’ reactions in this phase — the time taken from the initial halt to the first vehicle leaving the kill zone was about 5-10 minutes. The most important lesson soldiers took from blank fire was to execute in the din of battlefield noise.

Blank fire was repeated at least twice. A successful second iteration validated the method for live fire. A prerequisite for live fire was that safety personnel certify their soldiers could properly dismount their vehicles, conduct movement to the firing line, and shoot. Sol-



**Troops practice obstacle reduction as part of counter-ambush drills. The log barrier will have to be reduced so that the largest vehicle will be able to pass.**

diers were disqualified if they failed to point their weapons at the ground during individual movement, failed to keep their weapons on safe, or failed to point their weapons up and down range on the firing line. An accidental discharge of a weapon was a cause of immediate disqualification.

In the live fire phase, the validation run was repeated with ball ammunition. After the obstacle was reduced, range safety personnel cleared shooters before they left their firing positions. Their clearance was necessary before soldiers could remount.

The culminating event for the HHC convoy live fire was its convoy escorted live fire iteration, with two Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicles (BSFV) tasked as our convoy escorts. They provided the added protection of armor, a 25mm cannon, and a 7.62mm coax machine gun. One traveled in the front of the convoy and used its thermal sights to scan for targets; the second BSFV served as rear security. All other TTPs for this iteration remained the same except the need for a gun truck to move forward to suppress the enemy.

### Lessons Learned

- Always train React to Ambush drills. Our 88M and 77F soldiers often do not train to defend themselves. When soldiers have to be alert for ambushes, they do not give in to the mindset of the “Administrative LOGPAC.” This exercise generates soldier confi-

dence in his ability to hit targets outside the sanitized environment of the rifle range.

- Prior to executing the LOGPAC, check with the Military Police, if available, or the S2. Get an update of enemy activity in the task force rear area and when the MSR was last patrolled.

- Carry smoke as part of convoy load plan: preferably High Concentrate (HC) smoke. In case of an ambush, smoke grenades allow vehicles to obscure themselves from the enemy and are especially necessary if the convoy must reduce an obstacle. Colored smoke is also recommended as a visual recognition signal.

- Assign a breach team within the support platoon and train them to reduce wire/mine obstacles and log obstacles. Train them to identify booby traps and different types of surface laid mines. Ensure that they carry grappling hooks in order to reduce wire obstacles.

- Have an advance force travel 2-5 minutes ahead of the convoy. This force is in a HMMWV and consists of three to five soldiers with a squad automatic weapon (SAW) and grenade launcher. The advance force provides the convoy commander real time information on the condition of the MSR. If the main body is attacked, the advance force is in range to assist LOGPAC. When the convoy has a BSFV escort, there is no need for this advance force.





Convoy soldiers dismount to defend the column. The firing practice moved from a dry fire rehearsal to blank fire, then to live fire with close supervision for safety reasons.



- The convoy commander remains in radio contact with the field trains command post and/or the LRP. Further, the convoy commander is in radio contact with the mortar platoon. In case of an ambush, the mortars may be able to provide obscuration smoke and, if not danger close, high explosive rounds.

- Finally, the trains and LRP tracks the convoy from SP to RP and do a hand-over of the LOGPAC via radio.

### Training Aids

Training aids enhance training when they create the “effects of the battlefield.” For example:

- Artillery and hand grenade simulators were used to create the “sounds of the battlefield.” Trip flares and whistling devices were used as booby traps — these forced soldiers to thoroughly search obstacles.

- A MILES Fire-Back Device uses air to create the sound of a machine gun. Employed downrange, it is an effective way to create the effect of a live enemy

shooting at the convoy. It may also be used during the live fire.

- Target lift devices with E-type silhouettes were primarily used. An operator with the device remote control walked the lane and lifted targets on command. This reduced target confusion as the convoy moved through the range.

- Where lift devices could not be placed, E-type silhouettes were suspended at a 45-degree angle by cord and a balloon. Shooting the balloon caused the target to fall. This worked exceptionally well for training individual marksmanship fire control and fire distribution outside a qualification range.

- Uniforms on the targets further created the effect of a real enemy presenting himself.

- Video cameras recorded every action to allow us to dissect our TTPs at the AAR. Soldiers learned more quickly when they saw themselves making mistakes.

The threat situation on the Korean Peninsula requires task force logistics to train to defend themselves. They cannot assume that the enemy will only be forward of the LRP. Every soldier must be a rifleman.

The convoy live fire emphasizes this mentality in all its participants. There are many modifications of the HHC, 2-9 IN (M) convoy live fire model, yet the bottom line remains: the task force must be fed, refueled, and rearmed.

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